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ILR Cornell Sports Business Society

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Sports, Inc. Volume 6, Issue 2

Description

The ILR Cornell Sports Business Society magazine is a semester publication titled *Sports, Inc.* This publication serves as a space for our membership to publish and feature in-depth research and well-thought out ideas to advance the world of sport. The magazine can be found in the Office of Student Services and is distributed to alumni who come visit us on campus. Issues are reproduced here with permission of the ILR Cornell Sports Business Society.

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sports, sports business, sports management, collective bargaining, negotiation

Disciplines

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Sports, Inc.



A New Players Union?

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From the Editor:

Here in the ILR Sports Business Society, we strive on a daily basis to give students opportunities to discover the rewards that the sports industry can provide to them, whether it is those who have a passion to pursue career paths in the industry or simply want to explore new interests and curiosities in the rapidly burgeoning field. Through our various departments and wide-array of opportunities that we offer to the Cornell community, we stay true to our motto of “Advancing the World of Sports.” With advancement come adaptation, innovation, and growth.

This semester’s issue of *Sports Inc.* represents an advancement of the publication that you have enjoyed since the Spring of 2009. Among various other pieces in *Sports Inc.* you will find an application of Human Resource studies to the sports industry at large, analyses of globally-renowned leagues and international events, a summary of a case competition won by members of ILRSBS, and two opposing perspectives on one of the most contentious unionization issues in college sports in recent memory: whether the student-athletes of the Northwestern football team should be recognized as a union by the National Labor Relations Board.

Here in the ILR Sports Business Society, personal opinions, informed debate, thorough data analysis, and hands-on experiences are what matter to us. It is our mission to provide students with an outlet to find their passion through various means, including involvement in this publication. That is how we are making a difference for our students. That is how we are Advancing the World of Sports.

- Jesse Sherman

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As an organization, we seek to perform above and beyond expectations, preparing our members to rise to the challenges of the increasingly competitive sports industry. With this goal in mind, our team has delivered, with an especially strong speaker schedule, the top award in the Society for American Baseball Research's Diamond Dollars case competition, and record attendance at the Ivy Sports Symposium.

To say we will be future leaders in sports is not enough – we must actively pursue this goal. Our members continue to secure internships to help them to this end, and as an organization we provide career services and alumni relations support to complement their efforts. Furthermore, our print and digital publications, as well as our radio show, represent a few of the outlets enabling our members to engage analytically with sports topics.

We are approaching a new phase for the Cornell ILR Sports Business Society. From the Cornell campus to the professional world, our members are advancing the world of sports like never before. The great progress we've made in the past few years is thanks to the hard work and commitment of our alumni and undergraduates, as well as the faculty and staff who guide us towards our own versions of "the Show."

To those of you who have made this possible, thank you.

If you're interested in learning more about the Society or engaging with us, please email me at ajk266@cornell.edu, or Co-President Reed Longo at rdl64@cornell.edu.



Nowhere Summer 2022:

Why No City Should Strive to Host the Olympics

Jason Lefkovitz '16

Home-field advantage is a concept readily understood by any sports fan. Nevertheless, several sporting events – from major golf tournaments to college football bowl games – are played at neutral sites. In such situations, a new kind of “home-field advantage” manifests itself – just not one experienced by any of the athletes. Specifically, cities and countries believe that earning the right to host such sporting events is a triumph, enabling them to reap many benefits, such as prestige and a surge in revenue from tourism.

Indeed, cities or countries actively campaign for the privilege to host occasions like the Super Bowl and the World Cup.

Despite all the grandeur, however, hesitant critics often acknowledge the problems associated with hosting responsibilities. For instance, a mass descent by the media, spectators, and other participants in the festivities upon the finite space provided by the host could yield pressing security and logistical concerns.

The stakes of such a cost-benefit analysis are higher when pondering the merits of hosting the Olympic Games, for this occasion generates a uniquely extensive list of challenges for the host. In order to understand how exceptionally difficult it is to host an Olympic Games, one must first juxtapose the Olympics with other prominent sporting events held at neutral sites, such as the Super Bowl and the World Cup.

The Olympics is a *multi-*



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MANY OLYMPIC STADIUMS like the Bird's Nest used for Track & Field in China, are utilized only during Olympic events and then serve little purpose after the games conclude.

sport event (thus requiring many functionally and architecturally different venues) that occurs in *one city* (thus not providing much geographical leeway) over a *two-and-a-half-week span* (surely a long time to sustain adequate hospitality).

Meanwhile, the Super Bowl is only a *one-day event* that occurs in *one venue*; the World Cup is *hosted by an entire country*. Both of these events only require *one kind of sports venue* (just for football and soccer, respectively).

The idiosyncrasies of hosting the Olympics amplify the costs that are inextricably linked to hosting any sporting event. First, while any host city or host country must ensure that its infrastructure is adequate, this obligation is probably most challenging for a city hosting the Olympics. For Olympic host cities, the need to accommodate a wide array of sporting events with venues so abundant in quantity and purpose increases the likelihood that at least some

of these investments will lose value once the Games conclude.

A prominent example of such a facility is the Bird's Nest, the track-and-field stadium at the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. Although this architectural wonder was certainly a centerpiece of the spectacle at those Games, Beijing is now struggling to benefit from its existence. An NPR article by Louisa Lim, “China’s Post-Olympic Woe: How To Fill An Empty Nest,” discusses the amusing gimmicks employed to make some use of the stadium post-Olympics, such as charging \$20 for a 15-minute Segway ride around the track and building synthetic ski slopes.

Second, the aforementioned security and logistical issues

irking any host city or country are also augmented when hosting the Olympics. Specifically, as the 1972 Munich Games and the 1996 Atlanta Games unfortunately illustrate, the concentration of so many people in an isolated location like a city (rather than, say, a whole country) could render that city an appealing target for terrorism. In addition, cities hosting an Olympics are taxed with finding room in their already densely populated domains for new infrastructure and for an Olympic village to house thousands of athletes.

In the face of this challenge, a desperate host city may take desperate, ethically questionable measures to create the necessary space. For example, according to Nate Berg, in the article “Why Can’t We Just Host the Olympics in the Same Place Every Year,” approximately 150,000 residents (comprised mainly of slum inhabitants) of Rio de Janeiro are being relocated in preparation for the 2016 Summer Games.

When considering the difficulties that come with hosting an Olympic Games, we should not be surprised that some previous hosts have suffered catastrophic costs. As Nate Berg reminds us, Montreal, host of the 1976 Summer

“We should not be surprised that some previous hosts have suffered catastrophic costs.”

Games, struggled for 30 years before it finally paid off all \$1.6 billion of its Olympic costs. In



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

THE OLYMPICS can expose the flaws of a host country like the negative attention seen in South Korea for human rights violations in 1988 and Russia for anti-gay politics in 2014.

addition, according to many, the costs faced by Athens to host the 2004 Summer Games were partially responsible for Greece's horrible economic troubles.

What adds to the daunting nature of these costs is just how unpredictable they are, which obviously makes it hard for a city to gauge whether hosting the Olympics is financially wise in the first place. For example,

according to an article by Travis Waldron, "Sochi Olympics Will Cost More Than Every Other Winter Olympics Combined," "the \$51 billion cost is more than four times higher than the \$12 billion cost Russia originally projected when it won the Games in 2007."

A prospective Olympic host city could also miscalculate how beneficial such an endeavor really is. Perhaps

the enhanced prestige that a city – as well as the country that it represents – thinks it is earning by hosting an Olympic Games is an overrated notion. Such a plan by a city or country to boost its image could have an unintended opposite effect.

Hosting an Olympics broadens the lens of media scrutiny, which could plausibly uncover flaws that were not easily identifiable otherwise. For example, Greg Vitiello, in "How Host Nations Use the Olympics to Burnish their Country's Public Image," points out that, during the 1988 Summer Games in Seoul, the media's attention was primarily directed to the South Korean government's human rights violations instead of the country's economic boom. Another demonstrative example of this notion is the recent negative publicity regarding Russia's anti-gay policies that festered in the period leading up to the Sochi Games.

Various data illustrate that the perceived economic benefits associated with hosting the Olympics, such as increased trade, are also overrated. For example, research published in 2009 by Andrew K. Rose

and Mark M. Spiegel found that while "trade is around 30% higher for countries that have hosted the Olympics... unsuccessful bids to host the Olympics have a similar positive impact on exports." Therefore, perhaps a losing bid to host the Olympics is a blessing in disguise, for the city that lost the bid benefits from increased trade without having to worry about all the cumbersome costs of actually hosting the Games.

Given these considerations, hosting an Olympics is a high-risk/low-to-moderate reward scenario and thus, in my opinion, a rather irrational decision. In the spirit of the research by Rose and Spiegel, it is probably best for all cities to just bid to host the Olympics while ensuring that they lose those bids. Unfortunately, the one loophole in such a plan is that *some* city will *always* host the Olympics and thus must take on the onus of winning that bid.

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SECOND TO NONE:

How the NFL Became the Undisputed King of Sports

Andrew Distler '15

“Football is the most popular sport in the United States.”

This is a claim made by sports fans and analysts all across the country. But this statement grossly understates the actual situation. Football isn't just a staple of American culture: *It is* American culture. The sport of American Football (particularly the NFL) has become an outrageously profitable, year-round, 24-hour obsession, with a cult like following of fans who will consume whatever the NFL tells them to.

It has turned into an all-consuming beast that can greatly influence the political and economic decisions of the government, while at the same time directly impacting education at both the high school and especially the college levels. It has become simply, as author and football writer Gregg Easterbrook puts it, “The King of Sports.”

In Easterbrook's book, titled “The King of Sports: Football's Impact on America,” he explains both how football, especially the NFL, is able to be so profitable, while at the same time critiquing the culture of the sport in the US. But before delving into the culture of the game, it is important to comprehend how popular the NFL is.

According to the National Football League



Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

THE NFL IS without question the professional powerhouse in American sports. In 2013, NFL games were 30 of the 31 most watched television programs in 2013. What will 2014 bring?

Communication Department, NFL games constituted 30 of the 31 most watched television programs in 2013, and twenty games had more than 25 million viewers (up from eight the year before). Four of the past five Super Bowls have broken American TV viewership records, with the latest battle between the Seahawks and Broncos being watched by record 111.5 million viewers.

The league itself generated an astonishing profit of over \$10 billion this past year, up from \$8.5 billion only a few years ago, with a goal of reaching \$25 billion by 2027. It is quite obvious that the already popular NFL has become even more popular over the past few years, while showing no signs of slowing

down. When taking all of this into consideration, one must ask, “how did we get here?” Through several social, economic and even political trends, the NFL has become one of our nation's largest obsessions and perhaps even an obsession too big for its own good.

History of Football in the United States

A common misconception about American sports history is that baseball, up until the 1980s or so, was the undisputed and unchallenged most popular sport in the United States. This is not entirely true, as football has enjoyed great popularity almost since its inception. Since Princeton and Rutgers played the first American football game in 1869, college games have been very well attended and followed.

In the early 1900s, crowds of over 40,000 (much higher than the average baseball

attendance at the time) would regularly watch early football powerhouses such as Harvard, Yale and Penn play against each other. This is why many of these three schools, now in Division I-AA, have stadiums that have capacities similar to many current “big time” football schools.

But it wasn't just the east coast. In the 1920s, crowds even larger came out to see dominant teams such as Notre Dame, and in the 1930s, there were instances where over 90,000 would watch the annual Cal-Stanford game (a very impressive feat, given how much less sparsely populated California and the west Coast were at that time).

However, even though college football remained extremely popular throughout the first half of the twentieth century, pro football did not enjoy the same following. While college football had a large fan base, it was still very much considered a regional



sport, where unless there was a good team nearby, you didn't watch it. Also, for much of this time, the most famous American athletes were usually baseball players or boxers. It may be hard for the casual fan to fathom now, but after its inception in the 1920s, the NFL (originally called the American Professional Football Association) featured games played in front of sparse crowds, with teams regularly folding due to lack of funding.

In one instance, two teams, the Eagles and Steelers, actually had to *combine* their teams for the 1943 season. However, despite its humble beginnings, the NFL grew more popular each year, until the 1960s, when it was starting to challenge MLB as the most popular league in the United States. That's when television came into play.

After the first NFL game was broadcasted in 1939, the league was at the forefront of the television movement in sports. By the early 1960s, Commissioner Pete Rozelle made it a goal for every NFL game to be televised, a first for a major professional sport. Once the NFL became more accessible to fans, its popularity exploded.

It became by far the number one spectator sport in the US, while at the same time, players such as Joe Namath and "Mean Joe" Greene became cultural icons. After the creation of the Super Bowl and subsequent NFL-AFL merger, airing professional football became a significant source of profits. While TV networks paid the NFL roughly \$420

million a year to broadcast its games in the early 1980s, that number is now almost \$5 *billion* a year (combined total between CBS, FOX, NBC and ESPN).

Because of the advent of television, football became a must-see weekly event that people flocked to, regardless of whether their favorite team was playing. And with the expansion and improvements of in-home entertainment, watching football on TV has become one of the most, if not the most, popular thing to do in the United States.

Football Culture has Become American Culture

Another reason the NFL has become so popular is that football has become

e x t r e m e l y ingrained into American culture, to the point that it's one of the most American traditions today. Everyone who loves football will most likely follow the NFL. Almost all football fans, even if they mostly follow college or high school football, consume NFL products, which

is something that certainly cannot be said

about college basketball and NBA fans.

The Super Bowl is now an unofficial holiday, the best football players are now among the most marketable athletes in the country, and every Sunday during the NFL season is 100% dominated by football.

This wasn't always the case, as baseball had long been the sport that every kid played and watched growing up (it didn't become "The National Pastime" for no reason). But because of the exponential growth of the NFL (and college football) in the last few decades, football is now around kids in every shape and form, which will make them more likely to be fans when they grow up. Because of the omnipresence of football in American society, kids are going to want to play

it and because it's so popular, parents and schools are more than willing to pay for it.

Hundreds of thousands of kids play Pop Warner football (although that number has declined slightly in recent years) and over *one million* kids play high school football. While these numbers are staggering, what's most significant is

"The Super Bowl is now an unofficial holiday, the best football players are now among the most marketable athletes in the country."

that parents pay for their kids to play youth football, and taxpayer dollars (or private school tuitions) go towards playing high school football (and in some cases college football).

This means that unlike many other sports, the NFL does not have to pay very much money to develop its players, as taxpayers and colleges are more than willing to shoulder the cost of training future football players. This is one of the many financial advantages the NFL has that has made it so powerful. Other benefits include that the NFL is considered a non-profit organization, meaning it is tax-exempt (a benefit shared also by the NHL and the PGA). It also doesn't have to finance a minor league (like the NHL and MLB), as the NCAA takes care of that. This allows the NFL to save even more money in areas where other leagues have to spend it, which allows it to spend more on advertising and promoting its brand, further strengthening its stronghold on American culture.

What makes this situation potentially



Photo courtesy of the Harvard Archives

COLLEGE FOOTBALL first gained the interest of Americans, which led to growth in popularity of the NFL. Harvard, Yale, and Penn were the original best college football teams that led to this revolution in the sport of football.

dangerous is that because NFL owners have become so powerful, they can influence public decisions (oftentimes by pressuring public officials to let them build stadiums with taxpayer dollars). And on the collegiate side, obsession with football can lead to universities making dangerous decisions to try to protect their football teams, such as the Jerry Sandusky scandal at Penn State.

Not Just a Seasonal Sport

One of the reasons football itself is so popular in today's society is that it's built for this generation. There are lots of stoppages in play, which allows people to look at a second screen. You can watch multiple games at once, you can just watch highlights of a game to get a feel for what happened, and probably most importantly, the regular season is shorter than most major sports (four months). This also creates an exciting single-game elimination postseason.

However, even though the NFL completely captures the attention of American society from September to February, coverage does not stop. Fantasy football, which is a multi-billion dollar industry on its own, gets year-round coverage, with mock drafts being talked about shortly after the completion of the Super Bowl. Also, the NFL combine and draft both have gotten increasing amounts of coverage over the past few years, as now the whole combine is shown on TV.

How college football players perform has become



Photo courtesy of Superhype Blog

THE NFL HAS continued to accelerate its revenue over the last few decades. Can they continue to maintain this success?

front-page sports news. Leading up to the NFL draft, there is often as much coverage and analysis as there is for the Super Bowl, showing that even when football isn't actually being played, it dominates sports coverage in the US.

But it's not just the drafts. NFL free agency is starting to get similar 24-hour coverage to the draft, and NFL training camp news usually dominates sports headlines during a

time when baseball season is in full swing. Just like the advent of television made NFL games more popular than any other sporting event, the introduction of the internet and social media into the

world of sports has made all other non-game related NFL news and events major stories that people care more about than actual results from other sports. Now that the NFL has morphed itself into a league that can be talked about and analyzed 24 hours a day 365

days a year, it can further ingrain itself into American culture.

Will the Bubble Ever Burst?

We have discussed several reasons why the NFL and college football have become so popular, ranging from dominating TV and social media, to being the most popular sport among children. But a few questions remain: Can the NFL become too big for its own good, and is it growing at a rate that's unsustainable?

Dallas Mavericks owner Mark Cuban recently said that he thinks that expanded NFL coverage (the 2014 season will have games on Sunday, Monday, Thursday and Saturday) could lead to the league's demise, saying about the NFL: "They're trying to take over every night of TV. It's all football. At some point, the people get sick of it." Even though Cuban is known for saying things to produce shock value, he brings up a valid point: Can too much of a good thing be harmful?

One of the perks of the NFL is that it's usually a once-a-week watching experience, unlike baseball and basketball, which play games almost every day. However, if the NFL expands its coverage too, will people

still tune in? Another topic to think about is concussions, which is probably the issue NFL officials are most worried about. Not only are former players suing the league for hundreds of millions of dollars, but also as mentioned earlier, Pop Warner participation, as robust as it is, has actually declined in recent years.

Also, the possibility of lawsuits, and the potentially expensive concussion testing and preventative measures high schools may soon be required to have, could lead to many high schools actually dropping football. This would be detrimental to the NFL, as their pool of "applicants" that they pay no money for would shrink. And we haven't even mentioned Roger Goodell, who even though has seen the NFL become more profitable under his reign, remains extremely unpopular among many fans and players.

From rule changes to make the game easier for offenses, to questionable fines, to the embarrassing referee lockout in 2012, Goodell has made many very unpopular decisions, some which could have led to trouble if he were running another league. However, the popularity of the NFL continues to grow, and shows no signs of stopping. But one must wonder if there's one thing that the NFL could do to curb this growth.

For the time being, football, particularly the NFL, will continue to be the king of sports in the U.S. Almost all sports fans will continue to religiously watch on Sundays, and even non-fans will enjoy the pregame tailgating and watching parties on giant TVs. The NFL has become so popular that it is a cultural staple.

But that doesn't mean it's indestructible.

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Analyzing Surplus Value in MLB

Jesse Sherman '15

It isn't every day that a group of 19 and 20-year old students get to travel across the country together, prepare for a case competition with a baseball operations task presented to them, and present the findings to a room full of curious attendees and judges from the front offices of Major League Baseball teams and the Office of the Commissioner. I had the privilege of undertaking this unique experience with four of my peers, Max Fogle, Alex Smith, Hudson Belinsky, and Matt Provenzano, as we represented Cornell University in the third annual "Diamond Dollars Case Competition" at the Society for American Baseball Research Analytics Conference in Phoenix, Arizona from March 13-15, 2014.

Each year, the creativeness and intensity of the competition ramps up, as undergraduate and graduate programs alike strive to showcase their knowledge of the game of baseball and display their critical thinking skills over the four-day challenge. In 2014, the case prompted the 20 competing teams to make their argument for who the most valuable pitcher in baseball is.

More specifically, teams needed to rate the top 3 pitching assets in baseball in terms

of "surplus value." That is, which pitchers provide the most value to their team in terms of their market value in relation to the projected or actual dollars that they are being paid in their remaining team controlled years?

The process that our team undertook to attack the question started with defining the sample of pitchers that would give us the best chance of projecting a pitcher's performance throughout the entirety of his career. Starting in 1985, when Tommy John surgery was used with more regularity and pitchers' career projections became less variant and more predictable, we created aging curves that could reasonably be used to project the performance and value that a pitcher of a certain age and with well above average skill can be expected to contribute to his team through the age of 40.

We evaluated elite pitchers on the basis of the "Fielding Independent Pitching" (FIP) statistic, and those who ranked a half standard deviation above league average in at least one season were included in the aging curves. Curves were created for counting statistics that contribute to the calculation of FIP (walks, innings pitched, games started, hit by pitches, strikeouts, batters faced, and home runs allowed). These curves were created after



Photo courtesy of

JESSE AND HIS team presented their research on surplus value at the Society for American Baseball Research Analytics Conference in Phoenix, AZ on March 13-15, 2014.

our team manually crunched the numbers for the 261 "comparable players" who we considered to be elite players from 1985 to 2013.

These curves provided the basis for our projection system, known as the "Monte Carlo" model. The goal of creating the model was to analyze the aging curves in conjunction with the current elite pitchers' past performance to evaluate the number of "Wins Above Replacement" (WAR) they can be expected to produce for their teams throughout their remaining years under team control. Thus, we were left with one other question: how do we limit the field of players to be considered the most valuable pitchers in baseball today?

This forced us to dig deeper into the question of what constitutes how much value a player provides for his team. So ultimately, criteria was created to ensure that players with five or more years left on their contracts were equal to or better than league average FIP in 2013, players with three or four year left on their contracts needed to be at least a half standard deviation better than league

average FIP in 2013 and thus more elite, and players with two years or less remaining on their contracts going into the 2014 season were eliminated from the pool of elite pitchers.

The justification for this decision is that in the face of evaluating the player who is supposed to be the best asset for a team, generally having more years of team control will be beneficial for the organization and make that player's value more desirable in relation to the market. In other words, players with two or less years have significantly less time to provide their team with enough surplus value to be considered the most valuable asset in the game.

After applying all of the criteria, we were left with 41 players to evaluate in the Monte Carlo projection system, a list that included established and expensive veterans like Clayton Kershaw, Justin Verlander, Cliff Lee and Felix Hernandez, in addition to young stars of the future like Jose Fernandez, Gerrit Cole, Sonny Gray and Michael Wacha.

Once we were able to project how much WAR each player would produce



Photo courtesy of Fansided

THE RESEARCH team used different tactics to judge surplus value such as generating WAR values and applying the arbitration model to judge pitchers.

throughout their years under contract, we could calculate their surplus value (with a win defined in the rules of the competition as \$6 million per win, with inflation increasing this cost by 5% each subsequent year) by multiplying each player's total WAR by the marginal cost of a win and subtracting the salary that each player had on their contract in addition to the salary figures that we projected that they would make in arbitration if they had not already undergone arbitration or had not been extended through their arbitration years.

After generating WAR values, applying the arbitration model, and calculating surplus values, we were left with a list of players and sorted them in order of total surplus value. But our task was not over yet. In the prompt, the team was tasked with considering qualitative factors in the analysis. That is, we considered characteristics that contribute to a player's "makeup," including but not limited to professionalism, dedication to their craft, ability to rebound from failure, and experience in a winning environment.

After ranking the players in order of surplus dollar values, our team came to a consensus. The first and second most valuable assets significantly separated themselves from the pack and undeniably provided the most surplus value according to the projection model (See Figure 1 for top 10 rankings). Young lefty stars Madison Bumgarner of the San Francisco Giants and Chris Sale of the Chicago White

Sox share characteristics that played in their favor in their rise to the top: each of them is 25 years old or younger, both have improved in each year of their young careers, and perhaps most importantly, both have been signed to long-term extensions that take them through their high-priced arbitration years and have team options for their initial free-agent years. Given their elite level of play, young age, and cost effective contracts relative to the market, Bumgarner and Sale were the clear choices for the top two valuable assets in the game, respectively.

The third most valuable pitching asset was tougher to determine: while Gerrit Cole initially came out as the pitcher who provided the third most surplus value, both Sonny Gray and Julio Teheran had very comparable WAR projections. Furthermore, Jose Fernandez of the Miami Marlins had the highest WAR projection of anyone in the sample, excluding Bumgarner and Sale.

So what led us to ultimately decide that Gerrit Cole of the Pittsburgh Pirates was the third most valuable pitching asset in baseball? Not only was his WAR higher than Teheran's and Gray's, but he had less than one year of service time in the majors going into 2014 and thus more pre-arbitration years left than Fernandez, whose high cost arbitration and potential free agent years will come quicker than Cole's. Additionally, as far as makeup is concerned, Gerrit Cole is a former number one overall pick who has already experienced and thrived in a playoff atmosphere with a young team, and he has experienced and handled pressure in less than one full season in the big leagues. Not to mention that his pure "stuff" makes him one of the up and coming stars of the future. In the end, Cole's attributes gave him the edge over Teheran, Gray, and Fernandez, all of whom still provide their respective teams with tons of surplus value.

A few questions that we were left with and certainly wished we could dive into even more included the type of personality and makeup attributes that are most appealing to a team, how front office personnel and scouts can evaluate a player's qualitative features, and

what type of value can ultimately be placed on these characteristics. Additionally, we wanted to be able to evaluate each pitcher's injury history and risk and make it an important part of the analysis.

While we were able to account for some of the players' injury histories, there has been no concrete way to account for pitching injury risk, which seemingly is inevitable for any high-upside arm.

The good news is that doctors, researchers, and league personnel are making it a priority to uncover the signs that might indicate injury risks, and this is a field that will only become more relevant and established in years to come.

At the end of the day, our team took away so many valuable lessons from the Diamond Dollars Case Competition, both

“Given their elite level of play, young age, and cost effective contracts, Bumgarner and Sale were the clear choices for valuable assets in the game.”

from a Sabermetrics standpoint, and from the perspective of thinking critically about a complicated task and creating solutions under a tight deadline. Each of us got a glimpse into the vast amount of information that is available to us about the game of baseball, and it takes hours upon hours to sort through the data, make sense of what it tells us, and create a logical story out of the results.

It's one thing to report a player's statistics, but it's another thing to assign a value to the player, project performance into the future, and evaluate which assets provide the most value to their team. It was an honor to compete against schools like NYU-Tisch, Tufts University, Ohio University, and Rutgers University, just to name a few. Coming away

RANK	NAME	WAR	SURPLUS VALUE
1	Madison Bumgarner	32.459705	\$164,201,955.38
2	Chris Sale	29.95652863	\$145,547,027.32
3	Gerrit Cole	25.54109265	\$126,540,382.14
4	Julio Teheran	24.23915057	\$126,411,414.20
5	Sonny Gray	23.35100029	\$117,125,649.50
6	Jose Fernandez	26.59236672	\$111,060,409.39
7	Mike Minor	16.02	\$103,349,001.50
8	Anibal Sanchez	15.37067914	\$100,744,698.82
9	Hyun-Jin Ryu	19.84248847	\$98,173,481.75
10	Jose Quintana	20.79646169	\$96,072,982.96

Figure 1 courtesy of Cornell University SABR Team

THIS CHART provides the findings derived from the team's calculations for surplus value.

as one of the victors of the 2014 Diamond Dollars Case Competition certainly was not even the most rewarding part of the experience. The most rewarding part was digging deeper into a field of study

that has become exponentially more popular over the past few decades, employing critical thinking skills to analyze and uncover new information about America's pastime, and enjoying the week-long journey

that my friends from Cornell University and I will never, ever forget.

Jesse Sherman is a junior in the ILR School. He can be reached at jws328@cornell.edu.

Congratulations to Mark Tatum '91 on being named **NBA Deputy Commissioner & COO!**



The Cornell Sports Business Society (SBS) would like to congratulate **Mark Tatum '91** on being appointed **NBA Deputy Commissioner and Chief Operating Officer**. Tatum previously served as the NBA's Executive Vice President of Global Marketing Partnerships in which he oversaw the marketing and media partnerships across the NBA, WNBA, NBA Development League, and USA Basketball. A dedicated alum, Tatum is on the CALS Advisory Council, the Cornell Athletic Alumni Advisory Board, and has spoken with student groups such as the Cornell Sports Business Society. SBS is proud to be represented by sports industry leaders like Tatum, and we wish him the best in his new role!



Cornell Sports Business Society

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A UNION OF THE PLAYERS, BY THE PLAYERS, AND FOR THE PLAYERS

THE HISTORIC PUSH FOR A COLLEGE ATHLETES' PLAYER ASSOCIATION



"Athletes demanding further benefits have appeared to lose sight of the passion they should have for playing the game."

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"This unprecedented campaign for unionization in college athletics can be a major step for historic changes in the National Collegiate Athletic Association."

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For the Love of the Game?

Bobby Marani '16

In the 1998 American sports comedy *BASEketball*, an unknown narrator proclaims: "There was a time in America when contests of athletic prowess were a metaphor for the nobility of man... Historic moments forged by the love of the game celebrated the human potential to achieve excellence."

As much as I want to believe that athletes today play "for love of the game," I become more frightened of what will become of the sports world, especially with the sport of football, as each day passes. My concern is mainly due to the fact that sports seem to be progressing at a horrifying rate, as there are constant discussions about leagues changing rules for "player's safety" and various rumors about teams strategies to boost incomes. Some sports and teams have even discussed

placing company logos on team uniforms to gain more sponsorships.

If playing for fun and for love of the game isn't dead already, I strongly believe that it's on its way. The idea of playing for pay and for one's personal benefit has become especially apparent in college athletics where student athletes at various private and public universities have recently been up in arms about not receiving enough benefits from their schools, with none being more dominant than the case led by Kain Colter.

After a recent NLRB decision, Colter, the ex-quarterback of the Northwestern Wildcats and leader of the College Athletes Player Association, will soon be taking his battle against the NCAA to Capitol Hill in an effort to secure fair treatment and extended rights for student athletes. Colter's main argument in the CAPA case is

that college athletes dedicate the same hours to their sport as full-time employees do and deserve the same protections as any other workers. Although the recent NLRB's ruling would only apply to student-athletes at private schools, this is an extremely significant case that could change the face of college athletics.

Theoretically, if the recent NLRB ruling were to be upheld on Capitol Hill, athletes would then be considered full employees and entitled to things such as workers compensation, health benefits, retirement benefits, and full academic scholarships as opposed to a full athletic scholarship. As it stands, if a player injures themselves in their particular sport and is no longer able to play they can have their scholarship and financial support taken away

from them.

However, as an NCAA Division I athlete, I completely disagree with the unionization of college athletes. Especially given the fact that a group of people heavily consisting of teenagers would be thrown into an industry worth nearly \$16 billion, I believe that college

BIG

athletes forming unions would ruin college athletics. I, as an Ivy

League football player and student-athlete, receive no money from the university I play for. This makes it extremely frustrating to hear about student athletes such as Kain Colter that play at larger Division I schools and continue to demand additional money and benefits despite their current scholarships.

After having experienced both playing and receiving an education at Cornell University, I've found that the benefits I currently receive from the Ivy League and my school are incredible and thoroughly support all of my needs. This is most likely due to the fact that Ivy League athletes are treated like regular students, receiving only the amount of aid that students can't pay.

Ivy League athletes can't be penalized for quitting their sport or for not playing due to injury. This factor is the main reason why I think that the Ivy League is the gold standard for college athletics. Furthermore, not only are Ivy League athletes held to the same but higher academic standards than athletes at other Division I schools, they receive a fraction of the amount of perks for their participation.

For example, as a member of the football team, we are billed for pre-game dinners in



Photo courtesy of ChicagoNow Sports

WILL THE EFFORTS of Northwestern quarterback Kain Colter to unionize ruin the NCAA? Are college athletes in the wrong for wanting more pay and benefits for their effort?

season as well as for breakfasts in the off-season. We are also billed for the use of our travel suits and sweat suits used during away games. However, we get the money back upon returning them after the completion of our senior year.

Besides having various forms of free training gear and receiving two smoothies at a local café on campus for 6 weeks in the spring, I wouldn't consider myself having a luxury student life due being a member of the football team. However, I am spoiled by the fact that I get to receive an education from one of the top universities in the world, something I think Colter and other student-athletes have lost sight of.

Ivy League student athletes participate because they truly love the sport they play.

Period. Colter is correct in the fact that college athletes spend a tremendous amount of time devoted to their sport, which at times can seem overbearing and slave-like. He and other athletes demanding further benefits have lost sight of the enormous privileges they currently receive from their universities as well as the passion they should have for playing the game.

In reality, most NCAA Division I athletes already receive full financial coverage from their universities for things such as tuition, food, clothes, housing, medical coverage during their time participating, and various stipends each month. The amount of academic and athletic support that student-athletes receive is incredible. The spectrum of things that these athletes receive stretches from free tutors to envelopes of cash to shop for things like personal clothes and entertainment.

However, with the introduction of more money into the lives of college athletes, I think that we would also witness the introduction of corruption and greed into the college sports world. This can be best seen in the case of former USC running back and Heisman Trophy winner Reggie Bush.

Despite all of the perks Bush received while at USC, the NCAA found that Bush was accepting large gifts from several

sports agents, which violated his amateur status. As a result of his actions, the school faced the harshest punishment ever handed out by the NCAA.

Not only was Bush forced to forfeit his 2005 Heisman trophy, but the football team was also forced to forfeit the last two wins of its 2004 national championship season as well as its wins from the entire 2005 season. Furthermore, the USC football team was stripped of 30 scholarships over a three-year period and banned from bowl games for two years.

A f t e r

looking at a case like this, and seeing now the corruption and violation of rules by one player brought down an entire program, we must ask ourselves if we think college athletes could responsibly handle being paid and running their own union? Although Colter and others say they are entitled to the right as supposed "workers" to receive pay, I believe that they are not entitled to anything based on the current benefits and academic scholarships they receive.

Another big question that arises from

this is what types of players within what sports should be paid? It's a well-known fact that at most universities football and basketball are the two sports that bring in the largest amounts of revenue. According to Statistic Brain, Division I schools

have an average revenue of \$15.8 million per school for football and \$10.1 million per school for men's basketball.

From events like the Rose Bowl and Orange Bowl in football to March Madness in basketball, these schools bring in millions and millions of dollars. Does that entitle football players and basketball

players at these schools to more money than a golfer or tennis player at the same school?

If we dig a little deeper, what's stopping players like Johnny Manziel, who similar to Bush has come under the spotlight from not only his poor behavior off the field but also his actions violating NCAA rules, from saying that they should be paid more in comparison to other "lesser" players on the team. It's a fact that on the NCAA website Manziel's Texas A&M jersey sells significantly better than other members of his team.

"I think we will witness the introduction of corruption and greed into the college sports world."

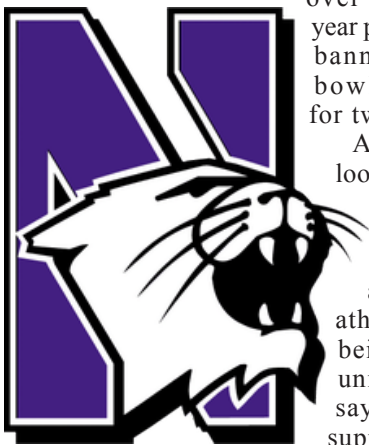


Photo courtesy of the Chicago Tribune

THE IMPLICATIONS of giving college athletes compensation can lead to individual greed. The star athletes may even negotiate to get more than their teammates.



Photo courtesy of Jacobin Magazine

ALTHOUGH KAIN COLTER'S attempt to unionize may be for the wrong reasons, his efforts will still bring about noteworthy changes in the NCAA. The most important of which will be provisions for concussion-related conditions.

What's stopping Mr. Manziel from demanding more money than the rest of his team too?

As it would happen, Manziel received a half game suspension at the beginning of the season for supposedly violating his amateur status.

He was investigated at the beginning of this season for violating NCAA regulations for financial gain. Manziel was alleged to have accepted payment for signing autographs on several occasions. A perfect example of how prevalent greed can be in the college sports world.

As I further examine the effects that unionization would have on college athletics, the amount of possible problems surrounding the idea becomes almost overwhelming. It appears that the probability of organizing a successful and beneficial union would

be extremely low.

However, as I hinted earlier, the biggest problem I have with the concept of the unionization of college athletics is that it creates the perception that athletes aren't attending universities to receive an education and benefit themselves intellectually. They are merely attending for financial reasons. The idea of "playing for the love of the game" would be completely destroyed and it would transform the way we look at college athletes. In fact, after the recent NLRB ruling, the president of the NCAA Mark Emmert said that "It so fundamentally changes the nature of what college sport is about, and it blows up what is one of America's iconic activities." Emmert went on further to say that "You're either a student at a

university playing your sport or you're an employee of that university."

Although I strongly disagree with Colter and the current case he's making against the NCAA, I do believe that his actions will bring about noteworthy changes. I think that the most probable of these changes will be that the NCAA will agree to a quick compromise entailing that all Division I athletes are entitled to full-cost athletics scholarships in which they can't be penalized for not playing their sport due to injury.

Additionally, I think that provisions will be made for post-graduate medical care, particularly for concussion-related conditions. I also think health benefits will be improved. The two main questions we must ask ourselves are: at what point do we draw the line for what

benefits proclaimed "student-athletes" should receive and what would be the ideal situation regarding benefits that the NCAA, Universities, and student-athletes would be pleased with?

Changes are inevitable, but the extent of those changes is unknown for the time being. As a student-athlete who thoroughly enjoys playing the game simply to play it, I hope for the sake of college sports that athletes aren't able to unionize and that student-athletes remain true "students."

Bobby Marani is a sophomore in the School of Arts and Sciences. He can be reached at ram482@cornell.edu.

Will Union Pressure Transform the NCAA?

Taylor Kosakoff '16

Northwestern University football players recently embarked on a maiden voyage to initiate major changes for college student athletes by organizing and forming a labor union. Led by this year's starting quarterback, senior Kain Colter, a group of Northwestern football players petitioned the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) to recognize the College Athletes Players Association (CAPA) as a labor union.

Presently, this attempt at union representation is limited to scholarship players. However, it is conceivable that representation will expand to include walk-ons depending on their success in the organizing process. At least thirty percent of the group trying to organize must join the petition in order for it to be effective, which means that 26 out of the 85 scholarship players are needed to join the petition.

The players were successful in surmounting this hurdle, so the next step was a decision by the Regional Director of the NLRB's Chicago Regional Office, Peter Ohr. Risa L. Lieberwitz, Labor and Employment Law Professor in the Industrial and Labor Relations School (ILR) at Cornell University, commented prior to Ohr's decision, "If you have an interesting and creative Regional Director, people may be surprised with the outcome." Peter Ohr was that interesting and creative Regional Director and made the decision that the Northwestern football players are employees and therefore have the right to union organization.

This unprecedented campaign for unionization in college athletics can be a major step for historic changes in the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA). With the meteoric rise in advertising revenue and television contracts, the NCAA has transformed into a multi-billion dollar industry. The spike in revenue for the NCAA, which is due in large part to the efforts of student athletes, has many parallels to the player-league relationship in professional sports.

In addition to the economic benefits, winning teams realize other advantages, the most notable of which is an increase in student enrollment and donations from alumni and fans. Specifically at Northwestern, the football team's revenue

is due in large part to the school's contract with the Big Ten Television Network, together with ticket sales. According to Alejandra Cancino of the Chicago Tribune, Northwestern's football games are accessible to more than 52 million homes contributing to their football team's revenue, which totaled \$235 million with \$159 million in expenses between 2003 and 2012.

There are major hurdles that Colter and his Northwestern teammates still need to overcome in order to gain representation. From a legal perspective, the biggest issue is whether students can be employees in accordance with Section 2(3) of the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA).

In the past, there have been several legal proceedings involving students trying to organize. In 2000, the NLRB ruled in favor of graduate students at New York University (NYU) and gave them Section 2(3) employee status under the NLRA, thus allowing them the right to organize and collectively bargain under Section 7 of the NLRA.

This case involved NYU graduate students, who were research and teaching assistants looking for representation as employees of the university. These graduate students believed they should have the right to be compensated and considered employees of the university because they assisted in teaching classes.

Four years later, the NLRB's decision was overturned in a similar case involving Brown University graduate student assistants. The basis for the decision

was that graduate student assistants were not employees according to Section 2(3) of the NLRA and that their roles as teaching assistants, research assistants, and proctors were a part of their graduate academic program. Therefore, collective bargaining would infringe upon traditional academic freedoms.

The Northwestern football players are similarly situated to the graduate students from NYU and Brown, seeking dual status as students and employees. Professor Lieberwitz commented, "As we know from the Brown University case, there is a narrow vision of the employment relationship when it is in the academic setting and you are also a student." Professor Lieberwitz mentioned that the change in the ruling made after the original New York University case was affected by the impact that new personnel had on the NLRB and a change in opinions over time.

Although the Northwestern case appears to raise the same issue as in the New York University and Brown University cases, there are different arguments being made by these players that could distinguish the Northwestern athletes. The most glaring distinction in this case is that the athletes' labor generates profits to make them akin to employees.

College athletes generate revenue directly to their schools, while the graduate teaching assistants, research assistants, and proctors in the other cases did not have this effect. As it regards the NCAA, Professor Lieberwitz opined, "It is an



Photo courtesy of CBS

THE NORTHWESTERN football team embarked on an unprecedented campaign for unionization. Can these student athletes be classified as employees?

enterprise, and the role the football players play in that enterprise is so similar to that of employees.” Dean of the ILR school and Collective Bargaining Professor, Harry C. Katz, said that the players are key to the success of sports programs, pointing out that “there is so much revenue at stake. People don’t go to the football games to watch the marching band, they go to watch the star players and the great teams.”

Additionally, an argument that the players have is that with practices, games, traveling, and other activities such as watching film, these student athletes spend in excess of 40 hours a week contributing to their college teams. The effort of the student athlete is in stark contrast to the graduate student case because the graduate assistants had more of a set schedule with fewer hours of work.

According to Ben Strauss of the New York Times, the graduation rate for student athletes at universities hovers around fifty percent, which provides evidence that athletics infringe on the education process. Most college athletes attend the universities because of athletics as opposed to academics, which is especially true with the premier college sports programs. The players could possibly switch their strategy to attain recognition as temporary employees. However, an argument they make is that the average college football athlete has a longer college career than the average professional NFL player.

Although compensation is an issue that may be addressed down the road, the union seeking to represent the college players, CAPA, has

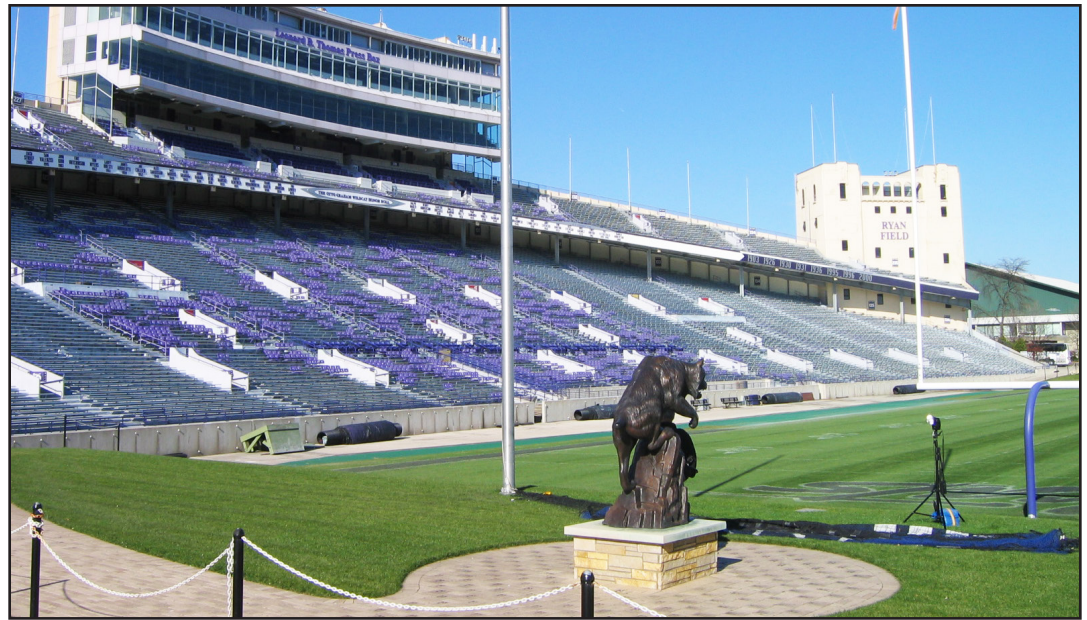


Photo courtesy of Creative Commons

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY made \$235 million from the football program alone this year. This is Ryan Field where the Wildcats play and went 5 - 7 this past season.

agreed that it would only try to negotiate matters that do not violate NCAA policies. With the NCAA’s prohibition against athletes accepting compensation or gifts in their policies, the union would focus on other issues like providing adequate protection for medical expenses, ease on transfer restrictions, and the loss of scholarships due to injury.

Dean Katz said he believes that another issue that the players would negotiate for would be their right to influence the decision whether they should go back on the field after injuries or concussions. Many times coaches pressure athletes to enter games or participate in practices when they have not completely recovered. Recently in the NFL, there have been major safety policy changes regarding players with concussions. CAPA could push safety conditions like the unions in professional sports have recently been doing.

A prime example of why these benefits are needed can be seen in the case of former Northwestern football player Jeff Yarbrough. According to Sara Ganim of CNN, Yarbrough was one of the fastest recruits for Northwestern football in 2003, but then he fractured both legs while representing his school, which resulted in the placement of metal rods and screws in both of his shins.

Yarbrough is unable to pay the \$20,000 to \$30,000 cost to remove the rods and screws from his shins in order to limit the pain he still feels. Since the NCAA and Northwestern do not cover the cost of medical expenses, many stories like Jeff Yarbrough continue to occur. Without any form of representation, college athletes lack the power to effect a change in these policies. With the CAPA, college athletes would have bargaining representation in order to improve their current position.

A final resolution of this case may take years to materialize and it is very likely that even if the union does win representation, the current players will not enjoy any of these benefits during

their college careers. Since the union won at the regional level, Northwestern has now chosen to appeal the case to be reviewed by the five member NLRB. If the union wins at the NLRB, the decision is then determined by an election.

If the union wins the election, Northwestern still may refuse to bargain because they still do not consider athletes employees. If this occurs, the case would be sent back to the regional level because Northwestern now would have an unfair labor practice charge. The NLRB would then have to revisit the issue whether players are employees. This could then possibly go to the Circuit Courts and could even reach the Supreme Court for a final determination.

The current status of this case is that the NLRB has set April 25 as the day for the players to vote to be represented by the union. Recently, Northwestern’s head football coach, Pat Fitzgerald, urged his players to vote against the union. Fitzgerald cannot say certain things about unionization to his players because it could be a violation of Section 8(a) (1) of the NLRA and an unfair





Photo courtesy of Chicago Sports Blog

NORTHWESTERN QUARTERBACK Kain Colter is leading a campaign to unionize student athletes, which could take years to lead to any real change in the NCAA.

labor practice; however, he can state his opinion about having his players unionize. The quarterback expected to take over Kain Colter's starting role, Trevor Siemian, has stated that he does not support unionization, along with other players.

Both Professor Lieberwitz and Dean Katz agreed that the union would have difficulty prevailing in the end, but recognize that there is a possibility of success because the circumstances in this case differ from past cases. Even if the union wins representation, the collective bargaining negotiations that would follow would take a long time. Dean Katz opined, "The NCAA could follow what many employers do in collective bargaining and stall." Dean Katz also said he believes that if the union was unsuccessful, it is possible that associations could be formed to exert pressure to exact change for the benefit of the student athletes.

If the union continues to be successful in this resolution process, the NCAA would be heavily affected by these union victories. Dean Katz said he believes that there would be a similar bargaining structure to that of professional sports, where there would be different tiers for varying interests to address. There could be distinctions between the national level negotiations with the NCAA and

the majority of universities, and there could be another bargaining tier between the student athletes and their specific schools.

With a huge variation in revenue existing from sport to sport, negotiations may differ depending on the sport. At

Northwestern, the only sports that generate any significant revenue for the school are football and basketball. Similar to professional sports, each college sport could have a separate union. With varying revenues for each sport, different unions may have stronger influence than the

others because there is less money to go around from some college sports.

Additionally, the distinction between public school students versus private school students could create variations in bargaining if the athletes are considered employees. Since Northwestern is in the private sector, the NLRB is the relevant law. However, in the public sector, you have different laws in different states, where some states do not even have collective bargaining laws. In New York, the Taylor Law does not allow public sector employees to strike. These differences can transform benefits across the NCAA and may even have an effect on enrollment.

Another huge factor that could impact universities is alumni influence. Dean Katz stated "the alumni are critical, especially for universities like ours and other Ivy league schools who get substantial donations from them." If alumni support unions and reform for college athletes, they can refuse to make further donations and exert heavy pressure on the universities. A backlash could also result with alumni influence if they pressure universities to reject unions.

Even if the Northwestern players do not win union representation, this case may nevertheless provide motivation for reform in the NCAA. More and more college athletes from different schools and sports will see that they are not being treated fairly, and could organize some form of solidarity for change.

The NCAA may initiate changes after hearing what the players' concerns are. Medical cost coverage is one of the most prominent issues that the NCAA will have to address. The Northwestern players and CAPA may not win this case, but their efforts could ultimately spearhead important reforms within the NCAA.

By not reaching for compensation, these student athletes have assumed a rational and justifiable position, which should win them support in the court of public opinion.

While the Northwestern players and CAPA may not win their case, their efforts may ultimately spearhead important reforms within the NCAA that would effectively secure the type of benefits that motivated Colter and his teammates to pursue union activity in the first place.

Taylor Kosakoff is a sophomore in the ILR School. He can be reached at tmk85@cornell.edu.

Cornell Wrestling: A Perennial Powerhouse

Noah Tanenbaum '16

If you polled random students throughout Cornell's campus and asked them about the most successful athletic program at Cornell, you may expect certain answers. Hockey and lacrosse are probably the first teams that would come to mind, as both of these programs have made national title runs in the recent past. However, it would surprise many on East Hill that Cornell's most successful athletic program does not compete in Lynah Rink or on Schoellkopf Field.

I would direct you further up Campus Road to the Friedman Wrestling Center to find Cornell's most successful athletic program. Way up on Campus Road, the Cornell community often forgets the Big Red grapplers. Coach Rob Koll's wrestling team, which starts 7 underclassmen, finished this season 7th in the NCAA Tournament, on the backs of three All-Americans: Nashon Garrett, Brian Realbuto, and Gabe Dean.

The wrestling team has enjoyed 12 straight NCAA top-12 finishes, and

8 consecutive Eastern Intercollegiate Wrestling Association (EIWA) titles, as well as crowning individual National Champions each year from 2007 to 2013. Kyle Dake '13, seen as just another Cornell student-athlete, graduated last spring as the most decorated wrestler in NCAA history, becoming the first wrestler to win National Championships in 4 different weight classes, as well as the first wrestler to win 4 National Titles without taking a "Redshirt" year. He is now in the discussion as the Greatest of All Time (G.O.A.T.).

Documenting the rise of the Cornell program is an important task, considering their standing as a current wrestling power. The fact that an Ivy League school, merely a regional power just 20 years ago, became a national wrestling power

that is mentioned in the same breath as traditional wrestling programs such as Iowa, Minnesota, Oklahoma State, and Penn State is nothing short of remarkable.

The wrestling program was started in 1907 with E.J. O'Connell as the team's first head coach. The Big Red crowned its first individual National Champion in 1928, with Glenn Stafford. For most of the 20th Century, Cornell was a regional wrestling power, competing with mostly east coast schools and making very little

impact on the national scene.

With two top 10 team finishes in 1957 and 1959 the program had seen its best finishes in almost forty years. The team did not place in the top-10 again until 1992, under the guidance of then-coach Jack Spates. Spates left the program

"Coach Koll is at the helm of a program looking to bring a National Title to Ithaca in the next season."



Photo courtesy of Mizzou News

CORNELL'S WRESTLING team has earned respect as one of the best schools in the NCAA with 12 straight top-12 finishes.



Photo courtesy of Flowrestling

FLOWRESTLING, the nation's premier provider of wrestling content, sent out this Tweet on March 26th, listing Cornell among the favorites to win a National Championship.

following that season to take the helm at the University of Oklahoma, where he coached for the better part of fifteen years.

When coach Rob Koll took over in 1993, he stepped into a program that had very low expectations and little support from school administrators. Koll himself admitted, when prompted about his goals for the program when he took over, that he could never envision what the program has become. Now, more than 20 years later, Coach Koll is at the helm of a perennial national power, and of a program that is looking to bring a National Title to Ithaca in the next two seasons, or so says the supposed G.O.A.T. and current assistant coach, Kyle Dake.

There are a multitude of factors that contributed to the rise of the program. The first of which was the building of the Friedman Wrestling Center in conjunction with the administrative backing of the program and the aid

offered in early-indication of a recruit's future admissions standing.

The Friedman Wrestling Center was the first stand-alone wrestling facility in the country. Opened in 2002 and owing its name to the generosity and involvement of Cornell wrestling alumni Stephen Friedman '59, the Friedman Center completely changed the Cornell program. Mr. Friedman, the former CEO of Goldman Sachs and advisor to President George W. Bush, was a wrestler for Cornell from 1956 to 1959, earning three EIWA finals appearances and a first place finish in the Amateur Athletic Union championship in 1961 at 160 pounds.

Currently, Mr. Friedman works in private equity at Stone Point Capital, based in New York City. Mr. Friedman was interviewed for this article and discussed his vast knowledge of the rise of the Cornell wrestling program.

While reluctant to take any credit for the recent successes

of the wrestling program, it is evident that the Friedman Center has had a drastic impact on Rob Koll's program. As Coach Koll advised in late February, the Friedman Center drastically cut down on the program's "waste." Koll detests waste, as it takes away from the productivity of his program, and the program was, out of necessity, incredibly inefficient.

Before the opening of the new facility, Koll's program would wrestle in Teagle Hall, would have to leave the building to get any sort of athletic training, then leave to go lift weights and then shower off site, all adding to practice time and taking away from time that wrestlers needed to complete their schoolwork. With the Friedman Center, everything is in house. The Friedman Center has 4 full practice mats (compared to 1.5 mats in Teagle Hall that they had access to for only 2 hours a day), a state of the art locker room equipped with a whirlpool, and a study lounge for the wrestlers to complete their heavy Cornell workload.

With the bleachers rolled out, the Friedman Center can seat 900 fans and the front rows are just inches off of the mat, creating an immense "home-field" advantage. Coach

Koll is adamant that, without the ultramodern facilities that resulted from Mr. Friedman's donation, the program would have been unable to attract the caliber of wrestlers needed to compete for a national title.

The impact of the Friedman Center goes beyond the training purposes of the facility itself.

Moreover, the biggest impact of the Friedman Center is its role in recruiting. Kyle Dake is convinced that the Friedman Center creates a huge advantage in recruiting, as its all-encompassing practicality gives the wrestlers a place that they can come to hang out and relax, as well as wrestle and constantly improve. Cornell, as an Ivy League institution, does not have the same recruiting advantages as traditional wrestling powers have. Since Cornell cannot offer athletic scholarships, this significantly hinders Coach Koll's ability to bring in top talent, but the Friedman Center has become a tremendous selling point.

Over the twenty years that Koll has been at the helm of the Big Red, he has managed to work within the current system and able to recruit top wrestlers and develop them into national champion contenders. Stephen Friedman believes that Coach Koll's recruiting strategy is both smart and efficient. He says that Koll brings in wrestlers who are both qualified and talented, and who want the opportunity to earn an Ivy League degree.

Most wrestlers realize that Cornell is the only place where you can get an Ivy League degree as well as the chance to wrestle on a National Championship team, year in and year out. There are, of course, some teams that have terrific seasons and compete for titles, but the consistency with which Cornell does it is what separates the Big Red from other regional powers.

Attracting top talent to Cornell is no small task. The rigorous admissions process severely hampers Koll's ability to recruit talented wrestlers, as he could rarely be sure if they would actually be accepted to



the school. Recently, Athletic Director Andy Noel has helped Koll and his staff with an “early indication” of a wrestler’s admission status. When Koll was unsure if he could get a wrestler into the school, he would recruit more than 30 wrestlers in a given class, and would be unable to give each recruit the attention that they deserved.

Now with Noel’s help, Koll can focus on the few wrestlers who he really wants, and can go out and get them. Coach Koll also has an incredibly in-depth knowledge of Cornell’s various academic options, and is able to direct recruits to the school that would be most appropriate for them, and also helps their admissions process. His most recent recruiting class may be the greatest in Cornell history.

He brought in three-time California state champion, Alex Cisneros, New York state champions Brian Realbutto and Dylan Palacio, as well as Michigan state champ Gabe Dean. Realbutto, Palacio and Dean all started for the Big Red in the 2013-2014 season and qualified for the NCAA Tournament, with Realbutto and Dean earning All-American honors. Cisneros sat behind two-time All-American Mike Nevinger at 141 pounds this season, but is expected to burst into the lineup next season and make an immediate impact.

The interesting thing about Cornell’s wrestlers is that they each have such a distinct style. Koll is not able to

recruit wrestlers of a certain style and prototype, as he is limited in who will be accepted and is almost compelled to “take what he can get.” A team like the Minnesota Golden Gophers and their coach J Robinson know exactly what they want in a wrestler, big strong “farm-boys” who will be able to use their brute strength, in conjunction with advanced technique, to beat opponents. Koll can’t afford to pick and choose, but he thinks that’s why the Cornell team is as successful as it is. They are able to bring in wrestlers with different styles and statures and make them National Champions.

While he isn’t able to necessarily handpick who he would like to bring to Ithaca, Koll is selective in who he brings into the program in certain ways. He looks for eclectic kids who are willing to work within the system, and expect to perform and be successful when they put on the red singlet and head out onto the mat. Koll has never lost a wrestler to transfer, and attributes that fact to the types of kids he brings in, who are willing to put the team in front of themselves. Furthermore, Koll strives to find kids who fall under the \$60,000 threshold for financial aid, so that the wrestlers are given full financial aid grants.

Coach Koll defines the coach’s role very broadly. He has been described as a motivator that brings out the best in his wrestlers, while being an expert

of the “X’s and O’s” that go with elite wrestling. According to Kyle Dake, regarding how Koll had impacted his career, Dake said that, “Coach Koll played ‘mind games’ with me and truly demonstrated the opportunity at hand, what I had a chance to do as a wrestler.”

Dake continued by saying that Koll knew exactly when to intervene in his preparation and when to let him go and figure it out on his own. He is said to possess the ability to read his wrestlers and understand exactly what they need from him to improve.

While there is no specific turning point in the wrestling program, Kyle Dake viewed the program’s “takeoff” with Travis Lee’s national championship after the 2003 season. It was after that date that the culture changed from the focus on an EIWA title and regional prowess, to the NCAA tournament and the goal to become a national force. After Lee’s title, every wrestler knew that they were expected to go out and win championships, year in and year out.

Two straight 2nd place finishes in the NCAA Tournament in 2010 and 2011 fueled the pressure for a national championship even more, and Coach Dake said he truly believes that the program will get there within the next two years. The Big Red is returning 8 starters from their 2013-2014 team, which finished in the top ten in the nation yet again.

The future is certainly bright for the grapplers on East Hill, but the path that the Big Red have taken to get to where they are today is extraordinary. The Cornell student body should consider it an honor to watch them wrestle and we can only hope for the best for Coach Koll and company in the near future.



Photo by Lauren Mahaney

COACH KOLL looks to bring out the best in his recruits by providing them with a state of the art training facility in the Friedman Center.

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The Dominance of the English Premier League

Karthik Sekharan '17

The English Premier League has certainly established itself as one of the better leagues in professional soccer. It can attribute its success to many things, one of those things being that it is one of the most well balanced leagues in the world. Every year there are multiple teams in the EPL that have a legitimate chance of winning a title, whereas in other leagues including Ligue 1, La Liga, and the Bundesliga, there are only one or two teams that have a chance at doing so.

The success of the many teams in the EPL can be at least partially associated with the large amount of foreign investment. Out of the twenty teams in the league, only seven are completely owned by United Kingdom nationals. Of those twenty teams, ten, including Arsenal, Chelsea, and Manchester City, are completely owned by foreigners.

Foreign investors continue to be drawn to the EPL because of the economic potential of owning a part of such a profitable league. This is the reason that it has become one of the leaders in viewership of any league in the world. From a business standpoint, the English Premier League has asserted itself as the most dominant professional soccer league in the world.

Television viewership of the EPL has reached extraordinary levels resulting in billion dollar deals with television companies that are fighting to broadcast games. The league claims that they are broadcast in 212 territories around the world working with 80 different broadcasters. They also claim that their television audience can reach up to 4.7 billion people and that they are broadcasting in up to 643 million homes worldwide.

According to Hamish Mackay of Football Fan Cast, "The latest television rights deal for the Premier League was sold for a combined total of about [\$5 billion] for 3 seasons, and that's just for broadcasting rights in the United Kingdom. The overseas rights are expected to go for around [\$3 billion] for the same

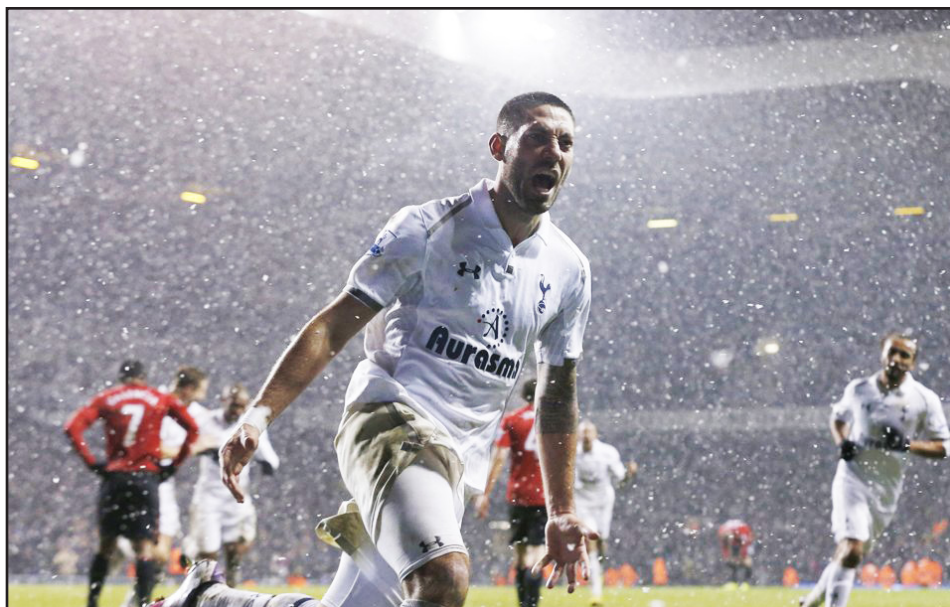


Photo courtesy of Business Insider

THE ENGLISH PREMIER League has dominated the international soccer landscape year in and year out, and it has shown no sign of slowing down.

period." Compared to other leagues this television deal is quite unprecedented. "The Bundesliga rights amount to around [\$1.7 million] less for the same period whilst the combined total in La Liga is [\$840 million] per season. That's roughly half of the amount received by English clubs."

In fact, looking specifically at La Liga, most of the clubs will not even receive the majority of the \$840 million. Most of it goes to either Barcelona or Real Madrid because television deals are struck separately. Television stations pay grandiose amounts to broadcast Barcelona and Real Madrid games because these are the most watched teams. The other teams in La Liga strike TV deals for much less. All in all, it is safe to say that the English Premier League is the most watched league in the world and its viewership shows no sign of decreasing.

One of the reasons that the EPL is so successful, as previously mentioned, is that there are so many clubs in the league that have potential to win the championship. This can be attributed to the fact that the league shares their financial packages amongst all of the clubs in the league. This strategy is very similar to

that of many other professional sports leagues throughout the world including Major League Baseball and the National Basketball Association.

The league asks all of the clubs to give a 50 percent of their revenue to the league and the league splits this money up evenly and distributes it to all of the clubs in order to promote parity amongst the teams. This process of splitting up the money equally is very different from what leagues around the world do. As previously mentioned, in La Liga, Barcelona and Real Madrid are incredibly rich clubs because they are given the freedom to strike individual television deals and keep all of the revenue they make.

It is very evident that from a business standpoint, the English Premier League has established itself as the most dominant professional soccer league in the world. The popularity of the league can be attributed to the competitiveness of many of the clubs, which attracts a very strong television viewership. This is a result of revenue sharing, which encourages equality amongst the clubs. All in all, the English Premier League handles its financials very well and this is what has made it one of the better professional soccer leagues in the world.

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HR Professionals as Source of Front Office Talent

Gabe Cassillo '15

Quick! Think about your favorite team. Stop and consider just how difficult it was to find that team's top player. Was he acquired in a trade; signed as a free agent? Maybe he was "home-grown" as fans always love to proclaim. Maybe the player was drafted as a number one overall pick, or maybe he was a late round sleeper. No matter how the player was acquired, on the other end of the transaction was a group of decision makers. These decision makers, whether a general manager, president, player operations staff member, scout, or analyst, are all ultimately responsible for finding, developing, retaining, managing, and planning around one thing: talent.

In the current environment of professional sports' front offices, decision makers come from the inside. Generally, the most significant voices, the individuals making trades, signings, and developing the overall organizational philosophy take a familiar path.

Generally, said decision maker is someone who has worked his or her way up to prominence within the organization. Individuals start at the lowest rung on the ladder, and one day, through hard work and a lot of breaks, they make it to the top.

It's an interesting concept, and one that isn't all that different from any other industry or career. While it makes sense that team owners would want to hire individuals who have been around the game for a long time and understand the way managing a team works, over time this can actually lead to some unintended consequences.

For one, individuals who have lived and worked and learned in the game for their entire life will be more likely to follow established norms. If you've been brought up in a given system, it becomes commonplace to follow the status quo. Things that might seem misplaced, or inefficient, tend not to be questioned. Rather than seeking new solutions, new ideas, or new questions, the old guard

tends toward the traditional. It focuses on the way things have been rather than the way they ought to be.

It's this phenomenon that exists not only in professional sports, but other prominent industries. It's the same kind of learned behavior that affects business ethics on Wall Street, and traditional businesses or industries that struggle to adapt to a changing world around them. It's also why we tend to praise outsiders or individuals who challenge conventional thinking in both industry and sports.

Whether it's recent tech moguls like Steve Jobs, or Mark Zuckerberg, or baseball general managers from non-traditional backgrounds such as

Andrew Friedman of the Rays or Jeff Luhnow of the Astros, individuals who challenge the status quo should be praised. There is an inherent advantage to a fresh way of thinking, and much like the Moneyball revolution that occurred in baseball, bringing in supposed "outsiders" creates an incubator for teams looking to find the next competitive edge. In an environment where this edge is increasingly hard to find, what team wouldn't want to

increase its likelihood of finding it?

Please don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying that correlation is causation. Just because a team hires an individual with a non-traditional background, he or she is going to have success. What I am saying is that in professional sports, where the difference between success and failure is so slim, teams ought to be looking for innovative solutions to distance themselves from the competition. Sometimes these solutions start off the playing field.

While in Major League Baseball specifically, "outsider" general managers have come from backgrounds in finance (Friedman) or engineering (Luhnow) and countless others. Individuals like Theo Epstein, Jed Hoyer, and Paul DePodesta are just other examples of the analytical, non-traditional executive. While this has been trending upward, specifically in professional baseball, there is still one traditional business

"You never know where the next big idea that revolutionizes a game will come from."



Photo courtesy of Alabama A&M University

THE NEW BREED of decision makers might be coming from non-traditional backgrounds within the realm of professional sports, such as finance and engineering.



Photo courtesy of The Fan Manifesto

THEO EPSTEIN, President of Baseball Operations for the Chicago Cubs, is one of many analytical, non-traditional executives. Epstein became the youngest GM in history when the Boston Red Sox hired him in 2002 at the age of 28.

function in which there has yet to be a high profile executive: Human Resources.

Before we dismiss the notion of an HR executive being able to successfully direct a professional sports franchise, consider once again what the role of top player personnel decision makers is. In essence, it's what HR managers do. Teams use analytics to evaluate performance. They strategically "interview" and vet their players before drafting, signing, or trading an employee. HR managers deal directly with compensation and benefits for their employees. Even things such as workforce planning, a relatively new concept in the world of human resources, directly parallels the strategy of professional teams by seeking to develop cost-controllable talent and plan to meet gaps in their pipeline by supplementing their talent base externally. Fundamentally, what is the difference between determining a salary structure for an accountant and a centerfielder or power forward? Even in writing this, the terminology blends together without even trying. Metrics and analytics are prevalent to decision making in industry as well as in sports.

I understand this may seem a bit radical, but underneath the veneer of drastic differences, behind the veil of

multi-million dollar contracts for superstar athletes, the fundamentals remain the same. Often times, the celebrity of sport clouds the way we see professional sports. Because at our core we're all fans, with emotional ties and investment of time, energy, effort, and emotion, we fail to see professional sports as just another business. At the heart of it, success on the field means being better than your competition. More times than not that means having more talent than your competitors.

In the past few months, as a student of the ILR School at Cornell University, and also an individual who would love to one day work in a Major League Baseball front office, I have wrestled with this question: How can my interest in sports, and specifically team construction, align with my similar interest in the area of talent acquisition, human capital, and getting the most out of employees in a more traditional line of work? I'm happy to say that more than ever I see that this question isn't asking me to choose one or the other. Instead, I've realized that I have already chosen. What interests me so much about player personnel in sports is the same thing that I love about human resources. It's about getting the most out of your team, putting the right people

in a position to succeed, and doing so in the most effective and efficient way.

I want to encourage anyone that is interested and loves the strategic, behind the scenes nature of professional sports to consider why that is. If it's because of some of the same reasons I've expressed, I'd encourage you to try to see sports as just one medium in which professional decision-makers work to achieve something great. For any individual in a front office reading this, I'd encourage you conversely to continue to think outside the box when looking for the talent that ultimately will discover, retain, and manage talent. When you construct your team off the field, continue to look for different backgrounds, different paths, and different perspectives, specifically in the area of human resources. You never know where the next big idea that revolutionizes a game will come from, so why not HR? Sport is Human Resources is sport.

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ILR Sports Business Society 2013 -2014



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